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No. 8 Fourteenth Year February 28, 1947

Conference on Evangelism

From the reports of the six Commissions of the Conference on Evangelism which took place in Geneva last week (see E.P.S. No. 7), we pick up the following highlights.

The report on "Evangelism Among Youth" emphasises that in spite of their disillusionment with ideological propaganda, young people crave for fellowship and are prepared to give themselves to a cause which promises to change the world. This can be nothing less than the whole Gospel. "Our message must be: Life is not meaningless: Christ has a purpose which demands every single one of your powers of body, mind and spirit". Therefore, the first essential in evangelism among youth is to speak in terms that the younger generation will listen to, and the second that the main agents of evangelism must be the young people themselves. The desire of young people to express their faith in action must be given concrete form in practical service in the Churches, and through the Churches to the Community.

The report on "Methods of Evangelism" begins with the affirmation that "the Bible shows that evangelism is God working towards men through the medium of the Holy Spirit. There can be no effective evangelism without a close and intimate study of the Bible as a whole. Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament the emphasis does not lie on specified methods, but always on the fact that the Word of God goes its own free way in accordance with the circumstance and the need.. In view of the fact that the world has developed, especially during the last war, a strong secular outlook, all methods of evangelism must meet to modern conditions so as to counteract the lack of knowledge of Christian values and conceptions". Answering the question why the apostolate of the laity must be realised, the report says: "Every man or woman who receives salvation also becomes a witnessing being... In view of the fact that they form an overwhelming percentage of the members of the Church of Christ, lay men and women must be filled with that missionary spirit". Therefore the training of the laity must be one of the main duties of the Church as a whole.

After mentioning the main forms of training the report concludes: "In all methods of evangelism there must be no compromise of the Gospel message, which needs to be presented so as to bring out the relevance of the Good News to men in idioms and language that can be fully comprehended".

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From the report on "Evangelism and the Ecumenical Approach" we quote: "As members of the various Churches with differing confessions, practices, politics and traditions, which live and work in differing situations, we sense our unity in Jesus Christ and feel compelled to preach the Biblical revelation of God's love for the whole world to all mankind in the Spirit of that unity which we have with one another through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In order to fulfil the evangelistic task in these critical times, we believe that the life and work, the faith and fellowship of the Churches should express and proclaim the fulness and universality of the Gospel... We are grateful to God for what He has done and is doing through the Churches. Each Church has its contribution to give to the fulness of the Church. But we are also filled with godly sorrow for our unhappy divisions which offend many without and within the Churches, and which weaken our Christian witness to our Lord and Saviour. We believe that an ecumenical evangelism must be marked by repentance and gratitude...

An ecumenical evangelism can and ought to be expressed through inter-church efforts inspired by the Gospel and its relevance to the present situation. Such a common testimony to Jesus Christ as God and Saviour will demonstrate to the world our unity in diversity, provided that those who engage in such efforts are willing to decrease that Christ might increase."

"The existence and work of the World Council, says the report on "In what Way can the World Council Make its Best Contribution in the Interest of Evangelism", is an expression of the ecumenical and evangelistic vitality of the constituent Churches. Evangelism is primary and central in the nature and work of the Council; as such the Council is a true manifestation of the Gospel which is at work in the Churches. The calling of this Conference is to us an assurance that the Word and Spirit are moving within the Churches as they confront the urgency of the evangelistic task of our time." E.P.S.Geneva

CANADA

Ambassador Meets Missionaries

The new Canadian ambassador to China, the Hon. T. C. Davis, before going to China has met in Toronto missionaries and representatives of the Missionary Societies which have work in China. He was seeking first-hand knowledge of China, he said. He met officials of the Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian and United Churches and a larger group at the Canadian School of Mission. He also met representatives of the Roman Catholic Church. E.P.S.Geneva

THAILAND

Church Gifts Break Black Market

The fine rice harvest which is generally easing the deplorable post-war food situation in Thailand would have been impossible without the atabrine pills sent by Church World Service, the relief and reconstruction agency of the United States Protestant Churches, according to a letter received by that agency from Bangkok.

"The farmers were so depleted with malaria, says the letter, that they would not have been able to do their work without the cure of your atabrine. The black market had raised the price of an individual tablet so that it was worth more than a farmer could earn in a month - and he needs 15 tablets to effect a cure of malaria. Your local committee here has been very clever in circumvening the black market. Naturally it was an almost insuperable temptation to a farmer to sell his precious tablet for so much wealth, so the committee distributed the tablets split in two. The result was no sale, and many farmers, over 150,000 of them, are well and strong, and atabrine now sells in Bangkok at a reasonable rate". E.P.S.Geneva

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An ecumenical evangelism can and ought to be expressed through inter-church efforts inspired by the Gospel and its relevance to the present situation. Such a common testimony to Jesus Christ as God and Saviour will demonstrate to the world our unity in diversity, provided that those who engage in such efforts are willing to discover that Christ might increase."

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Eastward-bound Missionaries

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Thailand's Great Black Market

The time-lag between which is generally seeing the deplorable post-war food situation in Thailand would have been impossible without the stalwart work of Church World Service, the relief and reconstruction agency of the United States Protestant Churches, according to a letter received by that agency from Bangkok.

"The farmers were so depleted with malaria, says the letter, that they would not have been able to do their work without the cure of quinine obtained. The black market had raised the price of an individual tablet so that it was worth more than a farmer could earn in a month - and he needs 15 tablets to effect a cure of malaria. Your local committee here has been very clever in circumventing the black market. Actually it was all about impossible transactions to a farmer to sell his precious tablet for so much wealth, so the committee distributed the tablets split in two. The result was no relapse, and many farmers, over 150,000 of them, are well and strong and stabilize rice sells in Bangkok at a reasonable rate". E.P.S.Geneva

ETHIOPIA

Brethren Aid for Rural Development

The Church of the Brethren (United States), which has supplied young tractor experts and tractors to teach modern farming methods to the Chinese, has extended its work to Ethiopia. At the request of the Ethiopian government, six men will spend a year teaching farmers in that country how to use tractors and otherwise improve their production methods. E.P.S.Geneva

BRAZIL

Cardinal and Human Rights

According to the "Christian Century" (Chicago, January 22, 1947), Roman Catholics in Brazil have been warned that hereafter they must not help in the building of "synagogues, mosques, Protestant churches or spiritualist temples" or cooperate in any social welfare projects promoted by those institutions. The warning is contained in a letter sent to the Roman Catholic clergy by Cardinal Mota and the suffragan bishops. It is to be read from all pulpits in the archbishopric The letter concludes: "No excuse will serve to justify such an attitude or to free the one who so cooperates from the charge of guilt against the only and true religion". The Brazilian clergy has been told that there must be in every parish a branch of the Roman Catholic Electoral League. E.P.S.Geneva

FINLAND

People's Opinion About the Church

A correspondent from Helsinki writes:

Ninety-seven per cent of the Finnish nation belongs to the Evangelical Lutheran National Church. An interesting light is cast on the attitude of the Finnish people towards its Church by the analysis of public opinion,which was arranged by the Finnish Gallup Institution about the end of 1946. The public was asked "Do you consider that the activities and preaching of the Church meet to the demands of the age or do they leave something to be desired in your opinion?" Forty-nine per cent of those who replied were of the opinion that the Church is on the whole up-to-date; 22 per cent thought it left something to be desired, 24 per cent had no opinion about the Church, and only 5% thought the Church of no importance. Some details of the results of the investigation are: The standpoint of the bourgeois parties (the Right and the Middle) and of the Social Democrats does not greatly differ from the total result of the investigation, but in the left wing of the Social Democrats the number of the opponents of the Church increases rapidly.

According to this investigation the greatest faults of the Church are conservatism and isolation from the people. People are for social activity on the part of the Church, its closer approach to the people, and they are desirous that the Church should put its doctrines into practice in every-day life. Sixteen per cent of the blame is laid on clergymen.

As a whole the investigation confirms the view that the position of the Church is at least for the present comparatively firm, although on the other hand, the anti-Church spirit gives evidence of becoming stronger. E.P.S.Geneva

GERMANY

Evangelical Council's Message to Pastors

The Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKID) sent the following greeting on February 10, 1947, to the Evangelical clergy of Germany:

"Dear Brothers! Owing to the spiritual distress of our people we turn to you, whose office it is to preach the Gospel.

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"Dear Brothers! Owing to the spiritual distress of our people we turn to you, whose office it is to preach the Gospel.

Wherever Christians meet together, they must praise God and honour Him for His mercy. We will do that even in this difficult time. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blest us with all kinds of spiritual blessings through Christ'. However poor we have become, we are nevertheless rich. We have the Gospel and for many of us it has assumed a fresh significance. The world is running after a hundred different lights; but God has revealed to us the one great light that lightens all darkness. All power in heaven and earth is in the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing is free from His lordship: no darkness concerning the future, no anxiety about our daily bread, no suffering concerning absent friends, no guilt in our own hearts.

We discussed our guilt in Stuttgart on October 18, 1945, and we maintain what was then said. But it distresses us to see that this message, which was addressed by Christians to Christians, has not yet been rightly understood. And yet we cannot make a new beginning in our Christian life unless we submit to the powerful hand of God, understand His judgment, confess our guilt, and receive His forgiveness at the Cross of Golgotha. Let us preach the Crucified Christ with new earnestness and new joy, so that our people may be ready to receive what God wishes to inscribe on their hearts today!

"But now, day in day out, we see our people led into fresh trials. Under the pressure of hunger the last moral restraints are breaking down. Illicit profits, black market, theft, robbery and prostitution are spreading more and more. Unable to bear the terrible cold, people are attacking transports of coal. Families are breaking up, because they cannot find a decent roof over their heads. Children are abandoned. Denunciations are on the increase, and are encouraged by the de-Nazification laws. Lying is becoming an everyday occurence. The propaganda of hatred is destroying love and chivalry. And the question whether the German people will ever be freed from the oppression of a branded nation reduces millions to bitterness and despair.

We are continually bringing our distress to the notice of the Occupying Powers and asking them to do their part to improve things. But a real change can only come from within. It is only through the teaching of Christ that the German people can be restored to health!

We therefore ask you to tell the congregations, that even in the midst of the greatest trials of our time the living God is at work. By sending us suffering and distress He is fighting for our soul. He is driving the plough very deep and cutting the furrows so painfully, that we feel as if we were torn asunder; but He is sowing His precious seed in those furrows. Exhort the congregations to explore the Bible afresh and to discover therein the wonderful way in which God leads His saints and how often His mercy comes to men during the very hardest experiences of their lives. Exhort them to help the lonely and the refugees, to pray for those in prison and to share their last piece of bread with the starving in love, so that through caring for others their own sorrow may become easier to bear!

Console one another with the consolation of the Gospel, so that you may be able to give the right consolation to others! Teach young people the sacredness of God's commandments. Teach all, that there is hope for every life through Christ, and hence that scepticism and despair are disgraceful and blasphenous and that we must pray God to protect us from them! Pray to God that He may turn the hearts of the powerful and create a peace, in which justice and love are found!

Christians are called in these dark days to be the light of the world. By force of your priestly intercession, you must be this light! Be a light to your congregations! Be a light to our whole beloved people!

And may our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, Who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and hope through His mercy, speak to your hearts and strengthen you in all your teaching and your work!" E.P.S.Geneva

UNITED STATES

New Presiding Bishop on Church Cooperation

Under the leadership of its new Presiding Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Henry Knox Sherrill, who succeeded Bishop Tucker, the Protestant Episcopal Church will continue to place special emphasis on cooperation with other communions.

In his first public address, at the third annual meeting of the Protestant Council of the City of New York, in February, Bishop Sherrill expressed the conviction that only through united action can Christian forces make an effective impact on the world, the nation, or the community.

Recalling the almost unanimous vote by which the Episcopal General Convention placed its stamp of approval on the World Council of Churches and the Federal Council of Churches in Philadelphia in September 1946, the Presiding Bishop declared:

"Progress cannot be attained by sporadic, intermittent, individualistic action or by Churches working as separate and distinct units, but only by a well planned and effective strategy backed by the pressure of Christian conscience and purposes in all of the Churches. Church cooperation now will make more likely in the future the building of the one Church of Christ for which we pray".

E.P.S.Geneva

YUGOSLAVIA

The Church Faces Grave Problems

On November 14, 1946, after a compulsory absence of five years and a half, most of which he had spent in the prisons and concentration camps of the Gestapo, the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Gavrilo, returned to Belgrade, to resume his spiritual office. At the same time the sessions of the Holy Synod opened under his direction. At the end of November a Conference was held of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

After the distress and suffering of the war-years the Serbian Orthodox Church is passing through fresh afflications owing to the proposed separation of Church and State in the new Yugoslav Constitution. The Bishops' Conference confirmed with much regret a series of examples of State interference in Church work, and also the fact that servants of the Church have been the victims of attack as for instance Bishop Irenaus of Novi-Sad (well known in the ecumenical movement) who was recently actually attacked while on a tour of visitation. Moreover the Bishops' Conference protested against the unjustifiable tendencious attacks on the Church in the press, and against inroads on church freedom in general.

The official paper of the Serbian Orthodox Church, "Glasnik" (The Messenger), of January 1, 1947 publishes one of the Resolutions passed at the Conference. This Resolution states that the new laws and ordinances - concerning agrarian reform, the abolition of taxes to the Patriarchate, the prohibition of collections in Church - have resulted in the Church having no means to support its clergy and its institutions; that owing to the behaviour of the State authorities the whole spiritual work of the Church - and of religious instruction - is impeded and prevented by the confiscation of Church buildings, etc; that ruthless action is being inflicted on church organs (heavy punishment of priests and so on), in order to deny the fundamental rights of the Church as an organisation(as incorporated in

And may our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and hope through His mercy, speak to your hearts and strengthen you in all your teaching and your work!" E.P.S.Geneva

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the State Constitution) and to undermine the unity of the Church by political methods.

The Bishops' Conference therefore resolved to try to bring about closer contact between Church and State, and to find a modus vivendi through holding deliberations together with the State authorities.

At the Pan-Slav Peoples Congress held in Belgrade at the beginning of December, 1946, one of the participants was the Russian Metropolitan Nikolai Krutizki from Moscow, who was the guest of the Serbian Orthodox Church throughout the Conference. At a service held in the Cathedral at Belgrade the Russian Metropolitan and Patriarch Gavrilo exchanged friendly views on the community between the Russian Church and the Russian people on the one hand, and the Serbian Church and the Serbian people on the other. Metropolitan Nikolai explained: "Since the national war the Russian Orthodox Church has sent out fresh growth: it is blossoming and growing stronger. The Church possesses 12 religious seminaries and 2 theological Academies. The churches destroyed are being rebuilt and restored, thanks to the understanding and help of the Government. There are thousands of members in the Russian Orthodox Church today. Holy Russia was and is a country of believers. The spirit of belief will never die in Russia. And the Serbian Orthodox Church, the dear sister-Church of the Russian Orthodox Church, will also live and blossom."

E.P.S.Geneva

ROUMANIA

Church and State

The relations between Church and State in Roumania remain those of mutual goodwill. In the King's last speech in Parliament, and in the President's reply, it was made clear that the Church receives State support. At the last Conference of the Holy Synod, this winter, its members were invited by Parliament. On this occasion friendly greeting were exchanged between Patriarch Nicodim, the parliamentary President and the Prime Minister. The President emphasised the necessity of a closer link between Church and Parliament. The Prime Minister advocated cooperation between Church, State and Parliament. All the theological faculties and religious academies are carrying on their work, in contrast to the Orthodox theological faculties in Belgrade and Sofia which are being closed this year. Religious instruction, although somewhat curtailed, is compulsory in all schools. Priests are also elected as members of Parliament. Religious literature and Christian periodicals continue to be published as before, though they suffer from the general shortage of paper.

E.P.S.Geneva

CHINA

Reconstruction Needs for Christian Colleges

The Associated Boards for Christian Colleges in China report that at least 15 million American dollars will be required to repair and to develop the 13 Christian colleges in China, 11 of which fell under control of the Japanese during the war. While only a dozen college buildings were entirely destroyed, most of the others are looted. When the war ended St. John's University in Shanghai and West China Union University in Chengtu were on their own campuses. The other 11 institutions were in temporary quarters. St.John's, Hangchow and Soochow, 2 of the 4 universities in the Shanghai area are planning to combine.

E.P.S.Geneva